

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath Finance Committee  
August 28, 2012

Time: 7:00 pm

Place: Sawyer Hall

Present: Ned Wolf, Don Freeman, Jeff Simmons, Gloria Fisher, and Kathy Inman

The minutes of the July 12 meeting were read and approved.

Ned will send members a list of our e-mail addresses.

There was a discussion of the Hosmer Road project. Don said that he thought the Highway Department had a chance to fix a long neglected road, and it was his impression that there was a choice between taking FEMA money for that project or taking no money. Members noted that Hosmer Road in its entirety is on the list of official town roads. Don questioned whether the Finance Committee has a say procedurally in these matters. Sheila has informed Don in an August 27<sup>th</sup> phone conversation that the net cost of the project to the Town will be at least 12.5% of the \$268,569.12 total, or \$33,571.14. Gloria asked whether the \$33,571.14 will be taken from Chapter 90 funds. Don said it was he thought that it would come either from Chapter 90 funds or from the Highway Department budget. Kathy asked how do we know that it was either FEMA money for Hosmer Road or nothing. She asked whether there had been any discussion of abandoning the repaired section along which there are no houses. Jeff suggested that land owners along the section of repaired road might be charged a betterment fee. Gloria noted that in the past the Town has not done that. She said that there are times when the Selectboard needs free rein in making choices. Ned's take on the initial concern expressed by Hosmer Road residents was that so much money was being spent on a section of road far removed from most Heath residents but that when the regulations of FEMA were more clear there was more acceptance of the project. He also noted that land owners along the storm damaged section might at any time demand that the Town provide better access to their properties.

Don received encouragement from members in proposing to write a letter to the Selectboard that would mention the Finance Committee's agreement that the Hosmer Road project was a management decision, would question whether the expenditure of over thirty-three thousand dollars was prioritized with other needs, and would express the committee's concern over the source of funds. Kathy noted that there is too much conjecture. There was a consensus that since such decisions involve Town funding, there should be greater sharing of information in the future. Jeff suggested that a letter be sent to Mike asking for an update on tropical storm Irene damage.

Gloria spoke of the practice of the Selectboard and the Highway Department sitting down once a year to hammer out the use of Chapter 90 money. She suggested that the Finance Committee be involved.

Kathy described a section of the town of Wendell's website where residents can see current Highway Department jobs. Don asked Kathy to research that. Heath might find it useful. In researching the pay

of highway department employees in other towns Kathy has found that all employees have both a CDL and a Hoisters' License and that none of them receives less than \$16 an hour. Jeff will do similar research on towns in Berkshire County.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ned Wolf, Secretary

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